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Truesdale





















LA PARRA

GRANDE

A LEGEND  
OF  
SANTA BARBARA'S  
"BIG GRAPE VINE"

BY  
AMELIA WOODWARD TRUESDELL

ILLUSTRATED BY N.F.B.

DOXEYS  
SAN FRANCISCO

1900







**S**anta Barbara's town  
Looks dreamily down  
From its hills to the murmuring tides;  
Her Mission white  
From its sunny height  
As a guardian soul abides.

**T**he mountains stand  
A protecting band —  
Round Mission and hills and town;  
Their summits bold  
Rising manifold,  
Make a valley's royal crown.









**A**mong those rugged steepes,  
Where the opaline deeps  
Of the air a soft scintillance cast,  
There still hangs an old tale:  
Like a cobweb pale,  
'Gainst the shade of a storied past.

**I**n the good old days  
When Franciscan Frays  
Held the land for their patron and Spain,  
To the mass often came  
A nag and a dame  
Whose strife makes our ballad's refrain.







he nag—long and lean,  
With dyspeptic mien,—  
Found Lent and the hills severe;  
The Señora was stout—  
As well as devout,—  
And grew portly with fasting each  
Year.

In the dewy dawn  
Of a Christmas morn  
The rough mountains looked dimpled and young;  
Blent the lowing of herds  
With the carol of birds,  
While the bells of the Mission out rung.







On this blessed day,  
In her festal array,  
To the mass Señora would go.  
In a distant dell  
The sound of that bell  
To Pinto brought only woe.



For he knew the rough road,  
He remembered the load  
Of zeal and Señora combined;

And he then and there  
All churches and  
Prayer  
To traditional  
regions  
consigned.



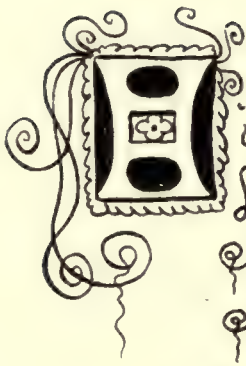




**B**ut relentless is Fate:  
 So, dumb yet girate,  
 He received his burden once more.  
 But he jogged that day  
 O'er the hills in such way  
 That her bones and her temper were sore.



**A**t the jubilant peal  
 Of those bells from Castile,  
 Still slowly proceeded this pair.  
 "Oh Pinto! is't naught?"  
 Cried Señora, distraught,  
 "That thou lose to my soul a prayer!"



**H**is languishing eyes  
 Looked a grieved surprise  
 At the selfishness thus displayed;  
 And he stopped quite still  
 At the foot of the hill,  
 By the loss of a soul undismayed.









From the Mission's facade  
The Saint standing guard,  
Looked down on this sturdy debate;  
While the dame grimly led  
The nag's drooping head  
Up the hill in a sorry estate.



With new wrath for each stone  
She climbed without moan,  
Her vengeance, like Fate's, should be fine.  
At the service's close  
She briskly arose,  
With a faith-inspired design.

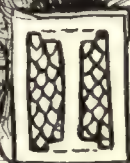








here its purple might fall  
On th' adobe wall,  
A stalwart grapevine stood;  
Its root had been laid  
When the first tile was made,  
By a Fray of the Brotherhood.



h its boughs — still rise  
With Spring's succulent life —  
There was healing for wrongs unredressed.  
"Let us see", quoth she,  
"What will come of the tree,  
Which the holy Padres have blessed".





**T**o complete the spell,  
 From the little well  
 Of a font in the church wall scooped,  
 She sprinkled the vine;  
 + Meath her faith's holy sign  
 Each leaflet in reverence drooped.



**W**hat the hills sloped down  
 From the valley's crown,  
 In her zeal she scarcely perceived;  
 And for Pinto's speed  
 She gave reverent heed  
 To the blessing her  
 switch had received.

**B**e not too severe:  
 There are many, we hear,  
 On orthodox methods intent,  
 Who have, at the need  
 Of a stubborn creed,  
 Their facts to their theories  
 bent.







With billowy sweeps  
 Of its sunny steep,  
 Montecito goes down to the sea;  
 Thither Pinto, that day,  
 Brought his dame in rare way,  
 Such the virtue of that blessed tree.

On her porch, that night,  
 In the moon's white light,  
 She gave thanks to  
 "The Mother of God":

As memorial fond  
 She planted the  
 Wand,

In her  
 doorway's  
 hallowed  
 sod.

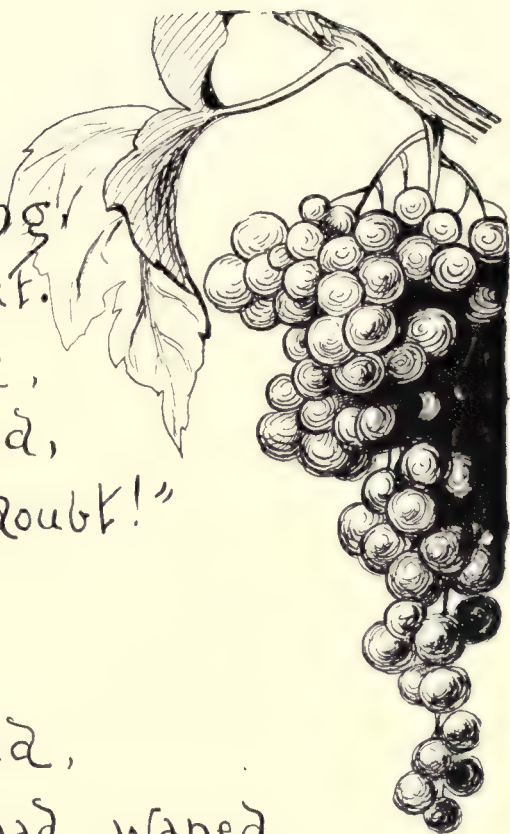








The summers were long,  
And the vinelet waxed strong,  
While Señora potttered about.  
All the country folk gazed,  
And crossed themselves, dazed,  
With "A miracle, this, and no doubt!"



For the tree had attained,  
While the years had waned,  
A size beyond  
all the vines;  
Till its luscious grapes  
In massive shapes,  
Overflowed  
in the  
purple wines.

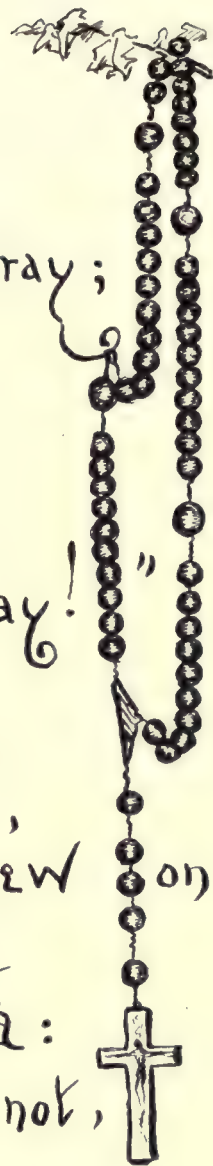




**W**hen Señora, grown old,  
 Her last bead had told,  
 In her hand lay the vine's tender spray;  
 And the prayers for the dead,  
 'Neath its branches were said,  
 While the leaves whispered

"Woe is the day!"

**W**hen the neighbors  
 were gone,  
 But the tree grew on,  
 Till babes in its shade  
 were old:  
 And its fruit failed not,  
 In this storied spot,  
 For a hundred years,  
 it is told.









So its fame went abroad,  
And with one accord,  
The curious came to see;  
Till as queen of all vines  
In the Southland's confines,  
Reigned this fair Santa Barbara tree.





**B**ut a ghost unlaïd  
Neath the boughs had long strayed  
Seeking vengeance for Pinks's woe:

There are mills which  
grind fine,  
With unerring design,  
Though they grind  
exceeding slow.

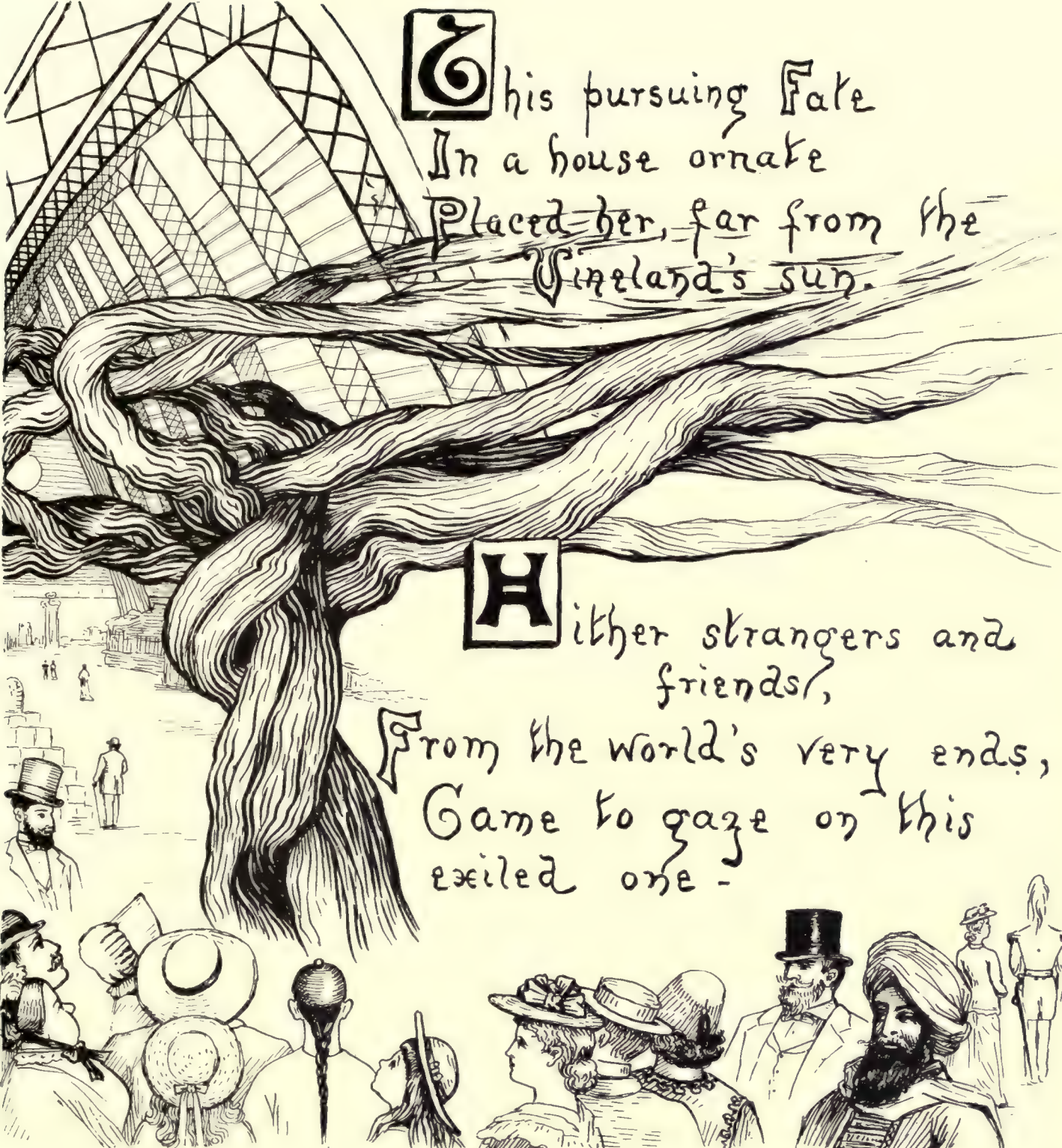
**R**etribution came  
In the nation's name

"The Centennial" claimed the vine.

Of her glory half shorn, to that town she was borne  
Which takes "Brotherly Love" with its wine.







**T**his pursuing Fate  
In a house ornate  
Placed her, far from the  
Vineland's sun.

**H**ither strangers and  
friends,  
From the world's very ends,  
Came to gaze on this  
exiled one -





Here for months she sojourned,  
While homesick she yearned  
For the hill with the surf at its feet:  
With her beauty all gone  
She stood there forlorn,

Nor yet  
were her woes  
complete



In a dreadful day, she heard one say  
"What a store of souvenirs  
This vine would make, — its story to take  
To the people in future years!"







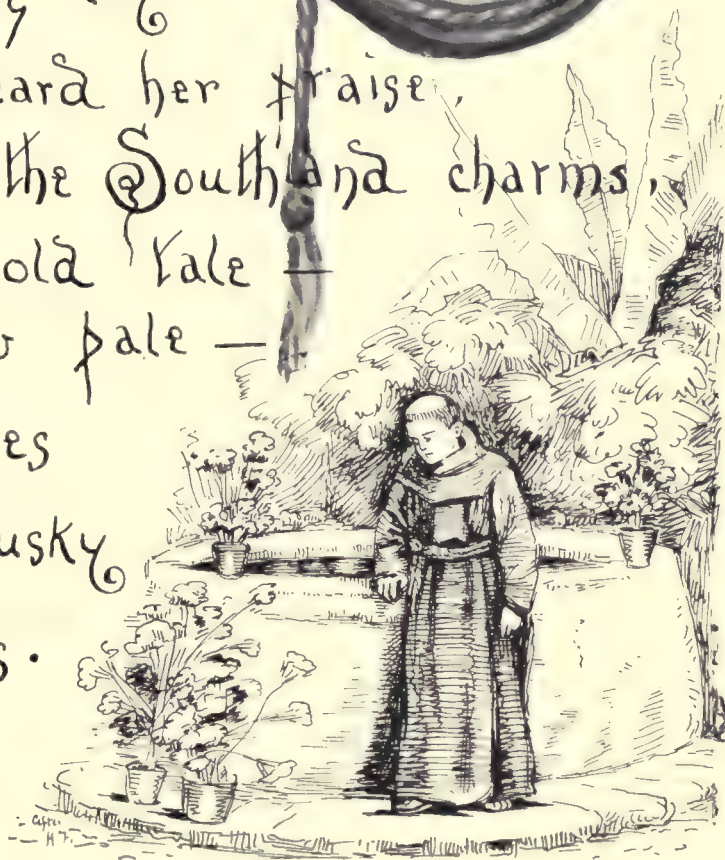


Then fashioned with knives,  
For sweethearts and wives,  
There was made of relics a host:  
Now she mourns o'er the earth  
The day of her birth,  
And remembers Pinto's ghost.





In our pleasuring days,  
When we heard her praise,  
Entranced with the Southland charms,  
We brushed this old tale —  
Like a cobweb pale —  
From the vines  
and the dusky  
palms.

































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